Valmiki's Ramayana and the Natyasastra

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THE RELATIONSHIP between the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Maharashi Vālmīki and the *Nāṭyasāstra* of Bharata Muni is more intriguing than it is normally thought to be. It has been customary to think that the growth of theatre as a developed genre is preceded by the formulation and collection of purāṇic Kathās or muthos, and that drama can only be enacted when myths are available to the playwright. But what may be true for the theatre of late classical times in Greece or India and the medieval times in Europe is just not the case with early antiquity. If the definition of drama is to include more than the so called classical plays, whether of Aeschylus or Asvaghosha, if drama or Nāṭya could include a variety of active performances before any audience or Samāja, if public ritual and dance of festive nature could also be considered akin to drama, then it is clear that Kathā literature succeeds dramatic representation, it does not predate it. In brief, it is likely that before the muthos of *Rāmāyaṇa* came to be given high literary expression by Vālmiki or Ādi-kavi, singers mimetic and other had already established a tradition of rendering the muthos in public. In reality, the Kusilavas were not 'sons' of the poet but his fellow-performers.

There is ample evidence in the extant editions of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* to make one conclude that music, dance and stage performance (Samāja) had attained a fair degree of maturity at the time of the composition of the epic. The references to music and dance are so widely interspersed throughout the text that they cannot be said to belong to just the earliest work of Vālmīki or later additions or to much later interpolations.

As far as variety of subject and minuteness of detail go, the *Nāṭyasāstra* hardly a rival. Nor is it any longer disputed that the present available recensions are not the creations of a single person. They have been composed, compiled and rearranged at least over three to four centuries. And all the arts and crafts that contribute to achievement of a stage performance (providing variety such as is inconceivable in any single performing art today) are under the scope of its detailed examination. The *Nātyasāstra*

has a lot to say on acting, dancing, histrionics, music, theatre-building and equally as much on play forms, prosody, language usage and audience habits. The author (or even authors) of the *Rāmāyaṇa* could not be expected to reveal his (or their) awareness of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* by referring to all or even most of the topics discussed in it.

If the *Rāmāyaṇa* therefore does not mention a theatre building (Rangamanḍapam) of any kind—let alone of the sort described in *NS* Chap. II—or if technical terms such as Pindibandha, Dasharupaka or Karaṇa are absent we need not rush to the conclusion that the Rāmāyaṇakāra was ignorant of the *Nāṭyasāstra*. Again, it is not to be overlooked that just as the *Rāmāyaṇa* took a few centuries to be compiled, so did the *Nāṭyasāstra*. Now, before we decide which of the two texts came to be compiled earlier, it is worth examining the terminology of Nāṭya and chiefly music (in classical times nothing was outside the ambit of Nāṭya) in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Of the terminology of *Nāṭyasāstra* as found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is to borne in mind that the epic writer used only such words as were commonly used. Nowhere in the epic is there a discourse on drama or music, nor does such discourse seem to be necessitated as discourses on dharma or Nīti, or on the duties of a king. Some later works, such as *Padma Charita* of Ravisheṇa, have passages giving accounts of the musical systems of their times. The poet of *Rāmāyaṇa* has nowhere commented upon Nāṭya and music as such, but only on life which has been adorned by these arts.

Broadly, the words used can be put into two groups. Words such as Gīta, Vīṇā, Tantrīlaya, Mridanga, Paṇava, which are to be found in a manual of music, are also present in common parlance. Then there is the category of words that are unusual in common speech and are loaded with technical connotations. Jāti, Sthāna, Mūrchhnā, Sruti, Lāsya, Sammūrchita, Samyā, Ātodya, Angahāra, Koṇa and Kalā-mātrā are unmistakably words not from colloquial vocabulary but from that of a discipline or sāstra. The *Rāmāyaṇa* does use Samāja, Ranga and Nāṭaka—each of these words once only—but not technical terms like Pūrva-ranga, Ranga-sīrsha, Dima, Samavakāra, Bhāṇa or Sandhi, which are descriptive of the literary aspects of drama. This only leaves us to speculate whether or not the full-fledged drama in ten genres had come into being by the time of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.

There is very little consensus among scholars as to which portions of the great epic should be isolated as creations of the legendary Vālmīki, and which should be regarded as later amplification and

outright interpolation. Nor is there any agreement upon the methodology which could be universally followed to prepare such critical editions of the epic that expunge the additions and interpolations with the expertise of the mythic swan that separates milk from water. This much is, however, commonly accepted: the Bāla and Uttarakāndas are afterthoughts not of the first Vālmīki but of succeeding generations of Bhārgava-clan munis who composed and maintained the tradition of *Rāmāyaṇa*, and who were known by the family name of Vālmīki. But there are in all probability whole chapters and clusters of verses, throughout the length of the Kāvya, which were so skilfully stitched into the narrative that their isolation can hardly be claimed to be more than guesswork.

While most of the muthos, such as of Gangā, Visvāmitra and Ambarīsha in Bālakānda, and a host of others in Uttara, are obvious additions, the descent of Sīta and the recitals of Lava-Kusa are likely to be as old as the basic muthos of *Rāmāyaṇa* itself. It is hard to believe that the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* was first poetically composed by Vālmīki and then the Pāṭhya (enunciable) work was converted into Gāna (song) and taught to Lava and Kuśa. Before a great poet like Vālmīki could undertake to write it, the story of Rāma must have been sung to the accompaniment of the harp by wandering bards, the Kuśilavas. It should not be left unnoticed that it was Nārada, after all, who advised Vālmīki to take up the task. Nārada, in early literature, is less of a Vaishṇava devotee and more of a musician. The nexus between the poet and the singer is well established. The Kuśīlavas, thus, may not be Acāryas or preceptors of music like Kṛsashva, Silālin or Bharata, but they were certainly singers who had been traditionally singing the story of Rāma well before Vālmīki[2]. The poet and his successors in the tradition must have always depended upon Kuśīlavas to take the epic to the people, till such time as the task of the Kusīlavas was taken over by the sedentary Kathāvyās. Whereas the latter spoke or sang the verses, along with comments, in a manner still to be known, the ancient Kuśīlava wandered through the streets and tunefully sang them while playing on his vīṇā. (The ancient Vīṇā was not the modern cumbersome zither but harp-like and slung over the shoulder.) The contents of Bāla and Uttarakāndas corroborate this.

It may also be safely presumed that the Kuśīlavas were specialists of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and because of their prolonged association with it they were elevated to the status of Rāma's sons. This process of attempted caste-climbing had begun not long before with the *Nāṭyasāstra*, which came to regarded as the fifth Veda, accessible to

the Sūdra as well. The Kuśīlavas, like all professional performers of ancient India, were Sūdras. It is therefore not rash to presume that the episode of Lava and Kuśa was the very first, along with perhaps Sīta's descent, to comprise the first Uttarakānda.

Whatever may have been the actual position of the performing Kuśīlavas, the sons of Rāma, as described in the two Kāndas, were expert musicians of very high order. There is also no doubt that the language used to describe them in both the Kāndas is of the same pen. In the opening Kānda the Slokas on Lava-kuśa are only three in number. The first verse indicates that the epic was taught by the sage as something to be enunciated (Pāṭhya) or recited (Geya), obviously as suited the occasion. This recitation or singing employed any of the seven Jātis. The voice of the singer covered the full range of three octaves, or septets to be more precise. The ancient harp, the bow-like vīnā, played most likely by the singer himself, provided not only support to the notes sung, but also to the rhythmic structure (tāla) of the song.

पाठ्ये गेये च मधुरं प्रमाणैस्त्रिभिरान्वितम् ।
जातिभिः सप्तभिर्युक्तं तन्त्रीलयसमन्वितम् ।। सर्ग ४/८
तौ तु गान्धर्वतत्वज्ञौ स्थानमूर्च्छनकोविदौ ।
भ्रातरौ स्वरसम्पन्नौ गन्धर्वाविव रूपिणौ ।। सर्ग ४/१०
अभिगीतमिदं गीतं सर्वगीतिषु कोविदौ ।
आयुष्यं पुष्टिजननं सर्वश्रुतिमनोहरम् ।। सर्ग ४/२७
(Bālakānda)

The two brothers looked like Gandharvas, professional musicians of very early history, who were elevated to celestial status in the later classical period. They were trained to render Gīta and Abhigīta[3] in the various styles or Gītis. Their knowledge of various Mūrcchanās and the expansion of a Jāti in the three Sthānas was complete. Besides, Lava and Kuśa were not only fully trained in what may be called the classical music of their age, but their singing was liked by not just a few but by everybody (Sarvaśrutimanoharam). The metre or Chanda used by the poet was given perfect musical score by using the same metre for the strokes (Karaṇas) on the vīṇā. Such was the presentation that Shatrughna heard when he passed through Vālmīki's āsrama while returning from Madhupurī.

इमास्तन्त्रीः सुमधुराः स्थानं वापूर्वदर्शनम् ।
मूर्च्छयित्वा सुमधुरं गायतां विगतज्वरौ ।। सर्ग ६३/१४
(Uttārakānda)

That Lava and Kuśa played upon the vīṇā themselves is made amply clear by the above sloka. The word Mūrcchayitvā shows that they tuned the strings to the particular Mūrcchanā or scale in which the verses were to be sung. That their song was a treat to other musicians (Gandharvas), experts in rhythm (Kalāmātrāviseshañjah), connoisseurs of notes (Svarāṇām-lakshaṇājñāh), grammarians and adepts in metre (Chandasu parinishṭhitān) can be seen in the following verses:

तां स शुश्राव काकुत्स्थः पूर्वाचार्यविनिर्मिताम् ।
अपूर्वां पाठ्यं जाति च गेयेन समलंकृताम् ।। २ ।।
प्रमाणैर्बहुभिर्बद्धां तन्त्रीलय समन्विताम् ।
बालाभ्यां राघवः श्रुत्वा कौतूहलपरोऽभवत् ।। ३ ।।
स्वराणां लक्षणज्ञाश्च उत्सुकान् द्विजसत्तमान् ।। ५ ।।
लक्षणज्ञाश्च गान्धर्वान् नैगमांश्च विशेषतः ।
पादाक्षरसमाससंज्ञाश्छन्दसु परिनिष्ठितान् ।। ६ ।।
कलामात्राविशेषज्ञाः ज्योतिषे च परं गतान् ।
क्रियाकल्प विदश्चैव तथा कार्यं विशारदान् ।। ७ ।। सर्ग ९४.

(Uttarakāṇda)

The terminology of music in the obove quotations from the Bāla and Uttarakāndas is common to the *Nāṭyasāstra*. Is this to lead us to conclude that these words are so common that they could be freely used by any poet, and that their use was inevitable in any reference to music? Does Vālmīki use them as a poet today would talk of rāga, Laya, Thāt or Mela, and of instruments in vogue like the sitār and violin? Although, as said earlier, Vālmīki is very far from being pedantic in his descriptions of things, he does reveal more than a common knowledge of music.

It is to be noted that Vālmīki's concept of music shows the unmistakable impact of Bharata's thinking. Whenever they may have been added to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, these Slokas show an awareness of the music chapters of the *Nāṭyasāstra*. Music in the ancient period was never devoid of poetry; hence the *Sāstra* is at pains to lay down the manner in which music and poetry are to be combined. The very definition of music (Gāndharva) in Bharata requires poetry (Pada) as an essential constituent of music: "Gāndharva is that which consists of Svara, tāla and Pada, in which many instruments but particularly the strings are employed"[4]. The song of Lava-Kuśa also had enough for the literati (Pādākshara-sāmā-sjnāh). The relationship between music and poetry was so intense that even

Vālmīki himself could not think of giving shape to his feelings in the form of Chandas not accompanied by music. He determined writing verse which would need the vīṇā (Tantrī-laya-samanvitam) and believed it could not be otherwise (Bhavatu na anyathā). Thus, it may be safely presumed that the composer of verses referring to music in the Bāla and Uttarakāndas was well aware of the *Nāṭya-sāstra*, or was at least writing at a time when similar ideas had been formulated. This formulation could only be an earlier version of the *Nātyasāstra*.

Another feature of the hoariness of the Lava-Kuśa episode is the lack of drums in the paraphernalia. It is not the Laya of drums that is provided but only that of harp. Apart from the fact that drumming would drown the verse, it is part of the minstrel tradition not to use the drum, but do the job by strumming. The manner and method of strumming, that is, using the plectrum (Koṇa) and the fingers and the whole hand itself, is extensively given in the *N.S.* (Chap. 31). And a system of strokes (Karaṇa) is indicated which is meant to provide accompaniment to any metre that the poet may have used.

Although some other terms related to the Grāma-mūrcchanā system of music of the *Nāṭyasāstra* are not found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is evident that Lava and Kuśa were following a mature system—the same as that of Bharata. A mention of the Sādhāraṇa notes, or of the mixed 11 Jātis other than the pure seven ones, would be indulging in pedantry.

The Uttarakānda of *Rāmāyaṇa* was well in existence before Kālidāsa. As has been pointed out, Kālidāsa makes Satrughna too considerate to visit Vālmīki's āshrama while returning from Madhupuri, lest the royal intrusion interrupt the penance of the sages.

Unlike the earlier references, the context is variegated in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa. Although this Kānda as a whole has never been regarded as a later addition, not all the Sargas extant can have existed from the earliest times. The very first verse, in which Rāma is described as accomplished in music, is perhaps an interpolation. While it is true that in contrast to Śiva and Krishṇa, Rāma has never been regarded as a music lover, accomplishment in the art was always a part of education in ancient times. And perhaps, therefore, the following verse:

गान्धर्वे च भुवि श्रेष्ठो बभूव भरताग्रजः ।
कल्याणाभिजनः साधुरदीनात्मा महामतिः ॥ सर्ग २/३५

The term Gāndharva is of *Nāṭyasāstra* age. If the interpolation was to be of a later age, the likely word in its place would have been Sangeet. The only reason for thinking of this verse as a later addition is the place it occupies. While mentioning the good qualities of the prospective ruler there is always room for expansion which the succeeding poet can undertake without much ado. Besides, the preceding chapter is certainly an interpolation as it shows Rāma to be an avatāra of Vishṇu. The following verses, from the entreaties and bereavement of Daśaratha, refer to Gīta and vīṇā in an unconscious way. What is said about the vīnā and Gīta is so universal that no relation to music of any particular period or its nature can be found in it.

> अनृतैर्बत मां सान्तवै: सान्त्वयन्ती स्म भाषसे ।
> गीतशब्देन संरुध्य लुब्धो मृगमिवावधी: ॥ सर्ग १२/७७
> नातन्त्री वाद्यते वीणा नाचक्रो विद्यते रथ: ।
> नापति: सुखमेधेत या स्यादपि शतात्मजा ॥ सर्ग ३९/२९

Buddhist Sutras like *Visukadassana*, *Lalitavistara* and *Divyavadhāna* use the word Samāja for performance which consists of a sedentary audience and performers that present drama and music. All purists and moral reformers like Manu and Ashoka have forbidden Samāja, Nacca, and Pekkha for students and mendicants and converts. Lakshmaṇa uses the word in the same sense when he describes the cultural life of Ayodhyā to Nishāda:

> आरोमोद्यानसम्पन्नां समाजोत्सवशालिनीम् ।
> सुखिता विचारिष्यन्ति राजधानी पितुर्मम ॥ सर्ग ५१/२३

Samāja, Prekshā, Nāṭya, Sāmājika and Prekshāgriha are well defined terms in the *Nāṭyasāstra* that have been in use alongwith, if not before, their Prakrita versions.

Other than Veda, ear and sound, Sruti is taken to mean the microtone into which a note can be divided. In the Ātodyavidhi or chapter on instruments, this subtle term is eloborately defined by Bharata. If a singer is described as Srutisīla, it should be taken to mean an expert singer who knows how the differences of Ṣrutis lead to changes in Grāmas, Mūrcchanās, and Jātis. It may be noted that in the verse below "Gāyakah srutisilāsca" cannot mean singers and students of Veda, but singers adept in usage of Ṣrutis. Vālmīki means the same as Yajñavalka when the latter says that the Jāti-ṣrutivisāradāh attain liberation without special effort[5]:

सूता: परमसंस्कारा मागधाश्चोत्तमश्रुता: ।
गायका: श्रुतिशीलाश्च निगदन्त: पृथक्पृथक् ।। सर्ग ६५/२

Needless to say, the music in which Srutis are so well recognized cannot but be the music defined in Ātodya-vidhi of *Nāṭyasāstra.* It is only when the technical value of Srutis had been demonstrated as in Sruti-nidarshana of the Ātodya-vidhi that the expert in sruti usage could be awarded the status of a spiritual Sādhaka. The idolization of the Gāndharva of *NS* and the belief in his spiritual efficacy, as indicated in *Yāgnavalka Smriti*, is a late phenomenon. The *Nāṭyasāstra* with its Ātodya-vidhi then precedes the Smriti work by a few centuries at least.

The following reference to Nātaka is from a portion of the Ayodhyākānda, which cannot but be taken as an interpolation. The narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa* would be least disturbed if this chapter as a whole were expunged. Bharata, while at the palace of his mother's parents, is disturbed by a nightmare, and his friends arrange for entertainment to cheer him up. They arrange for Sabhā, Kathā, instrumental music and Nātaka. As Daśaratha had died in Ayodhyā and the bad dream was only an indication of the event, Bharatà could not shake away his gloom. The whole episode is obvious amplification. The Śloka however, runs as follows:

वादयन्ति तदा शान्ति लासयन्त्यपि चापरे ।
नाटकान्यपरे स्माहुर्हास्यानि विविधानि च ।। सर्ग ६६/४
(Ayodhyākānda)

It seems that the otherwise austere Bharata was always provided by others with plenty of music and dance. On his way to Chitrakūṭa along with his army he was offered the best possible musical fare that the divine Gandharvas could render at the behest of the sage Bharadvāja:

आगुर्त्रिंशतिसहस्रा नन्दनादप्सरोगणा: ।
नारदस्तुम्बुरुर्गोप: प्रभया सूर्यवर्चस: ।। सर्ग ६१/४६
एते गन्धर्वराजानो भरतस्याग्रतो जगु: ।। ४६ ।।
अलम्बुषा मिश्रकेषी पुण्डरीकाथ वामना ।
उपानृत्यन्त भरतं भरद्वाजस्य शासनात् ।। ४७ ।।
विल्वा मार्दङ्गिका आमत्र शम्याग्राहा विभीतका:
अश्वत्था नर्तकाश्चासन् भरद्वाजस्य तेजस: ।।४६ ।। सर्ग ६१

That these verses are unmistakably post-*Nāṭyaśāstra* is a foregone conclusion. The Apsarās named here are among the list of Bharata Muni's actresses who helped him produce the first play before Lord Siva. Besides these very popular names in musical history, there is the reference to Samyā, which requires expert knowledge of tala conventions. Among the various movements of hands that were made by connoisseurs while marking the Mātrās of a given tala, one movement is defined by the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as Samyā. However, it is not easy to conclude as well that this passage, because of the miraculous nature of the episode, is a later interpolation. Even if it does not belong to the pen of the very first poet, it seems to have been interwoven at the earliest stages of the amplification of the epic. It is yet another pointer to the antiquity of the influencing text, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

The description of the rains by the sorrowful Rāma in the Kishkindhā Kānda is one of the most moving passages in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It seems that its loveliness inspired addition and a description of the Sarada season was appended. Some of the verses refer to music. In the earlier monsoon description the word Sangīta seems to denote not just music, but rather a festival of music:

षट्पाददतन्त्रीमधुरामिधानं प्लवगमोदीरित कण्ठतालम् ।
आविष्कृतं मेघमृदङ्गनादै वंनेषु संगीतमिव प्रवृत्तम् ।। सर्ग २८/३६
क्वचित् प्रनृत्तैः क्वचिदुन्नदह्मिः क्वचिच्च वृक्षताग्रनिषण्ण कायैः ।
व्यालम्बवर्हाभरणैर्मयूरं-वेनेषु संगीतमिव प्रवृत्तम् ।। सर्ग २८/३७

The two verses above are most probably later additions. The use of the word Sangita also indicates that. However, the addition is not of so late a date, but late enough for substitution of the earlier term Gāndharva by the later term Sangita. In the account of Śarada season, there is mention of the Mūrcchanā method of tuning the musical instrument Gargara:

वेणुस्वरव्यणिजततूर्यंमिश्र प्रत्यूषकालेऽनिलसम्प्रवृतः ।
सम्मूर्च्छितो गर्गरगोवृषाणा मन्योन्यमापूरयतीव शब्दः ।। सर्ग ३०/५०

Although later Gargara[6] came to be a word for churning stick, its Vedic and archaic meaning should be kept in mind. In the given context it certainly refers to musical instrument and not a churning stick. Only an instrument of some sort can be "Sammurchhita" (tuned). The references in this Kānda are, however, of too general a nature to correlate to any text, let alone the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

It is in the following Kānda that we find the most extensive material relating to dance and music that is available in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki. The situation, indeed, calls for it as we are led with Hanumāna into the private bar and bedroom of the legendry sensualist Rāvaṇa.

The Lankā of Rāvaṇa has stayed in popular imagination, as much as in the commentaries of Kathā-vyāsas, as a bastion of indulgent (Tāmasic) living. When Hanumāna steals into the city to locate the place where Sitā is being held captive, he has a spy's justification to pry into the privacy of Lankā's residents, who naturally live in excessive luxury. And what can be a more convincing device to portray the indulgence of Lankā residents than to show them and Rāvaṇa, in particular, as immersed in wine, women and song? Although this portrayal might have been by the original poet, such descriptions could also have lent themselves to later enlargement. Any guess based on analysis of Vālmīki's poetic style can hardly be conclusive, nor can a guess based on architectural evidence lead anywhere. It has been suggested by Dr Sankalia that as ancient India came to know of grape wine only after major Hellenic contact, i.e., after Alexander's invasion, the "Pāna-Bhumi" of Rāvaṇa could not have been imagined by Vālmīki. It is highly unlikely that India waited for Alexander to taste grape wine. On the contrary, the Greek tradition attributes (in Euripides's *Bacchae*) a visit to India by Dionysus. As Robert Graves sums it up:

> . . . his [Dionysus's] Indian compaign has been taken for a fanciful history of Alexander's drunken progress to Indus, but is earlier in date and records the eastward spread of the vine.'
> [*The Greek Myths*, Vol. I, p. 109.]
>
> Wine was not invented by the Greeks: it seems to have been first imported from Crete. Grapes grew wild on the southern coast of the Black Sea, where their cultivation spread to Mount Nysa in Libya, by way of Palestine, and so to Crete: to India, by way of Persia, and to the Bronze age Britain, by way of the Amber Route. [*ibidem.*, p. 107]

As Dionysus had, as early as the 13th century BC, acquired the status of a god, the spread of grape wine to India through the Persian contact must have had occurred some time in the eighth or seventh century BC, This evidence indicates a date for the possibility of a grape-wine Pāna-bhumi in India a thousand year before Dr Sankalia's placement of it in the late Gupta period. It hardly needs to be further added that Rāvaṇa's bar may have been full of wine other

than grape. To sum up: Vālmīki or his very first successor could have composed the episode. It may also be added that the chapter describing the Pushpaka vehicle is obviously an addition, but any attempt to expunge the text of it need not take in the chapters on bar and bedroom in their totality.

Hanumāna found the demons of Lankā not lacking in taste as far as music is concerned. What he heard was not ordinary but ranging in three octaves (Tri-sthāna-svara-bhushitam). Such music can be very sophisticated:

विविधाकृतिरूपाणि भवनानि ततस्ततः ।
शुश्राव रुचिरं गीतं त्रिस्थानस्वरभूषितम् ॥ सर्ग ४/१०

This verse only provides for our purpose what we have come across many times earlier. Something new is provided by the account of dancers and players lulled into deep slumber by their own music and the overflowing wine. The revelry of the evening ended with no bang but whimpered into the silence of slumber as the wine drowsed patron and performer alike. The beauties leaned over their own instruments and fell asleep. This gives the poet a wonderful opportunity to impress upon the reader the variety of music that must have emanated from the wealth of instruments that are now silent along with their players in front of Hanumāna.

Of nearly all the instruments that find mention in various chapters of the *Nāṭyasāstra*, almost all are included below.[7] However a mere reference to the name of these instruments affords little conclusion. Interspersed with the names are three very specific terms from the vocabulary of the Sāstra—Angahāra, Vipancī, Ātodya.

नृत्यवादित्रकुशला राक्षसेन्द्रभुजाङ्कगाः ।
वराभरणधारिण्यो निषण्णादहरो कपिः ॥ सर्ग १०/३२
अङ्गहारैस्तथैवान्या कोमलैर्नृत्यशालिनी ।
विन्यस्तशुभमर्वाङ्गी प्रसुप्ता वरवर्णिनी ॥ १०/३६
काचिद् वीणां परिष्वज्य प्रसुप्ता सम्प्रकाशते ।
महानदी प्रकीर्णेव नलिनी पोतमाश्रिता ॥ १०/३७
पटहं चारुसर्वाङ्गी न्यस्य शेते शुभस्तनी ।
चिरस्थ रमणं लब्ध्वा परिष्वज्येव कामिनी ॥ १०/३९
काचिद् वीणां परिष्वज्य सुप्ता कमललोचना ।
वरं प्रियतमं गृह्य सकामेव हि कामिनी ॥ १०/४०

विपञ्ची परिगृह्यान्या नियता नृत्यशालिनी ।
निद्रावशमनुप्राप्ता सहकान्तेव भामिनी ॥ १०/४१
आतोद्यानि विचित्राणि परिष्वज्य वरस्त्रियः ।
निपीड्य च कुचैः सुप्ताः कामिन्या कामुकानिव ॥ १०/४६

Karaṇa, Mātrika, and Angahāra are three specific terms for dance stances (today called Mudrās) that are defined in the *Nâtyā-sāstra*. The Śloka uses the word Angahāra in accordance with it. Similarly, it is the pre-Christian-era vīṇās that could be hugged and leaned over, as a lotus reclines against a ship, and not the later zither-type vīṇās. When unspecified the big 21-stringed instrument is called by the generic name vīṇā. It is this huge instrument that suits the metaphor for ship (Pōta). The smaller Vipanci can be embraced fully like a lover as the verse says. In the end the poet has used the term Ātodya bearing in mind the definition given in the *Nāṭyasāstra*, i.e., anything on which music is played. In brief, the whole description shows the unmistakable impression cast on the poet's mind by the text of Bharata.

As appropriate to the heroic mood of the Yuddhakānda, sweetness of music is replaced by the high noise of roarers and drums. But the most interesting passage makes the playing of vīṇā on the stage a metaphor for the bow-wielding Rāvaṇa. On hearing from his spy Śuka about the strength of Rāma's army, Rāvana brags about the havoc he shall wreak, handling his bow in battle as a musician handles his vinā on the stage:

न जानाति पुरा वीर्यं मम युद्धे स राघव ।
मम चापमयीं वीणां शरकोणैः प्रवादितम् ॥ सर्ग २४/४२
ज्याशब्दतुमुलां घोरामार्तगीतमहास्वनाम् ।
नाराचतलसंनादां नदीमहितवाहिनीम् ॥
अवगाह्य महारङ्गं वादयिष्याम्यहं रणे ॥ सर्ग २४/४३

This passage more than any before clarifies the harp-like, and not lute-like, design of the vīṇā. That the harp players entered the dramatic performance area and sat there to provide musical accompaniment is also obvious. On a big stage (Mahāranga) the harp player seems to have contributed much towards the impact of the performance.

Having noted the various references throughout the corpus of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, what can be the conclusion as far as the relationship between the two texts, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Nāṭyasāstra*, is concerned? Some of the results can be put down as follows:

1. The *Rāmāyaṇa* muthos was sung by the Kuśilavas before Vālmīki gave it its first shape that later grew into its present literary version. Within a century or so of Vālmīki's achievement the description of Lava and Kuśa was added, which later found a place in two Kāndas. As music was a vehicle for transmission of the epic muthos even before Vālmīki, it continued to be so afterwards as well. From the accounts of Lava-kuśa, the formulation of the system of Gāndharva of *Nāṭyasāstra* is quite obvious. If Vālmīki wrote around 700 BC and the Kusilava additions made around 600/500 BC, the *Nāṭyasāstra* in its kernel form could have been contemporary if not earlier to Vālmīki.

2. Śruti, Samāja and many other terms, even if regarded as later additions (of around 3rd--2nd cent. BC), show the pervasive influence of *Nāṭyasāstra*.

3. Similarly references in the Sundarakānda (quite likely from Vālmīki's pen and, if additions, then not of later than 3rd cent. BC) point to the same as 2 and so do the verses from Yuddhakānda.

4. The compilation and growth of *Nāṭyasāstra* then has been contemporary to *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is not possible to say yet, nor has there been any attempt to determine, as to which portions of the *Nāṭyasāstra* were compiled earlier than the rest. Particularly, the section on music can hardly be called a growth later than the sections on dramatic performance. As the dates of the epics *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* are a matter of constant revision in the light of newer evidence, so must the period of the composition and compilation of the *Nāṭyasāstra* be shifted accordingly. □

NOTES

The text of *Rāmāyaṇa* used for the present article is the one published by Gita Press, Gorakhpur. The edition is said to be based on the southern recensions. Most of the quotations (with the exception of the one from Yuddhakānda) are also included in the critical edition published by Oriental Institute, Baroda. If not in the main portion, some are given in the Appendix.

1. I have used the word 'muthos' to distinguish it from myth, which has now acquired the unshakable connotation of falsehood. Muthos, by reversion to the original Greek, will hopefully retain the implied depth and element of 'plot' given to it by Aristotle.

2. By the time of Kālidāsa, the original function of the Kuśilava bards was totally forgotten and a fanciful etymology for their names invented;

"They were called Lava and Kuśa because of being wiped with lava and kusa grass on birth of the caul fluid." (*Raghuvamśa*, Sarga 15, verse 32)

3. The distinction between Gīta and Nirgīta is well known in *N.S.* but Abhigita as a term is not to be found. It is possible that it is used as a synonym for Nirgīta, which means a song with nonsensical words like modern Tillāna or Tarānā. The five kinds of Giti are well defined in later works like *Sangeeta Ratnākara* but not in Bharata. However, the edition of *N.S.* available to Kallinatha, the 14th-century commentator on *Ratnākara*, had mention of five Gītis: "Tathā cāha Bharata—purvarange tu śuddhā syāt bhinnā prastāvanāśryā. . . (S.R. Kalli, Adyar edition, p.5, *Rāgādhyāya*).

4. *N.S.* Chap. 28. verse 8, Baroda edition: "Gāndharva is to be known of three constituents, svara, tāla and pada.". Similarly, Chanda, Alankāra, and rules of grammar are part of Gāndharva-sangraha for Bharata (verse 11).

5. *Yājnavalkya Smriti*, Prāyaścita chap. Yatidharma verse 115: "Vīnā vādana tatvajno jāti śrutivisāradah tā lajnośca aprayāsena mokśamārgam niyacchati." This Smriti being again a work of not later than 2nd cent. BC shows that not only had the *N.S.* musicology acquired an established status by then, it had also been credited with Adrisya-phala, i.e. spiritual merit.

6. *Rigveda:* Mandala 8/ Sukta 69/ mantra 9. Gargara, Godhā and Pingā were used in the festival honouring Indra:

   अवं स्वराति गर्गरो गोधा परिसनिष्वणत्
   पिङ्गा परि च निष्कददिन्द्रोय ब्रह्योद्यतम् ।

7. In addition to the ones quoted there are six more verses naming Mridanga Dindima, Ādambara and Muduka, and Sarga 11 (verses 5 & 6) names Muraja and Celikā. It may be noted that popular instruments like Citrā and Ghoshikā find no mention here, which were well known in circa 2—3rd cent. AD.